

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T ROME 0235

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FOR THE SECRETARY AND DR. BRZEZINSKI; DEPT PASS TO WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE VISIT TO ROME BY SPECIAL EMISSARY

REF: AARON-GARDNER TELCON, JANUARY 5

1. UPON FURTHER REFLECTION FOLLOWING DAVID AARON'S CALL TO ME TODAY, I BELIEVE EVEN MORE STRONGLY THAT A VISIT TO ROME BY A SPECIAL EMISSARY FROM OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT, SUCH AS GEORGE BALL, WOULD HAVE A DECIDEDLY NEGATIVE AFFECT ON WHAT WE ARE ALL TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH HERE.

FIRST, IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO KEEP SUCH A VISIT OUT OF THE ITALIAN PRESS, PARTICULARLY AS THE VISITING EMISSARY, ACCOMPANIED BY ME, BEGINS TO MAKE THE ROUNDS OF ITALIAN LEADERS. THE DISPATCH OF SUCH A VISITOR WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY MANY NEWSPAPERS AND POLITICIANS AS A DRAMATIC ACT OF US INTERVENTION IN ITS "CLIENT STATE," ENGENDERING IN TURN A SPATE OF POLEMICS CAUSING RESENTMENT AND CONFUSION.

SECOND, NO MATTER HOW ABLE, A SPECIAL EMISSARY FROM THE OUTSIDE WOULD COME IN COLD INTO AN EXTREMELY COMPLICATED AND HIGHLY CHARGED POLITICAL SITUATION. THE RISKS FOR SERIOUS ERROR IN THE
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CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE.

THIRD, IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT SUCH A VISIT WOULD CAUSE SPECULATION THAT THERE EXIST SERIOUS DIVISIONS OF OPINION EITHER IN WASHINGTON OR BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND THIS MISSION. IT WOULD LIKELY RECALL TO PRESS COMMENTATORS AND OTHERS THE VISIT OF ANOTHER NON-EXPERT TO ROME AT ANOTHER CRITICAL TURNING POINT IN POST-WAR ITALIAN

HISTORY. I AM REFERRING TO THE VISIT HERE OF ARTHUR SCHLESINGER
IN THE EARLY 1960'S ON THE EVE OF THE CENTER-LEFT EXPERIMENT.

HIS VISIT--WHICH IS STILL TODAY THE SUBJECT OF BITTER, PUBLIC
DEBATE HERE--WAS SEEN AS THE RESULT, AT LEAST IN PART, OF A SERIOUS
SPLIT WITHIN OUR GOVERNMENT. THE VISIT OF A SPECIAL EMISSARY
TODAY, AT AN EVEN MORE CRITICAL TURNING POINT IN ITALIAN HISTORY,
ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AS TO HOW FAR THE
U.S. GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO COUNTENANCE FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO
THE COMMUNISTS, COULD WELL LEAD TO SIMILAR SPECULATION.

FOURTH, IT WOULD ALSO BE IMPORTANT NOT TO FEED THE FERTILE
IMAGINATIONS OF ITALIAN POLITICAL OBSERVERS, ALLOWING THEM TO
REACH UNFLATTERING CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE AUTHORITY WITH WHICH
MY MISSION IS CONDUCTING ITS BUSINESS.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, I BELIEVE THAT IT COULD BE VERY SALUTARY
IN THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR SECRETARY VANCE TO VISIT ROME ON THE
WAY BACK FROM THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE LATER THIS MONTH. HE COULD
COME HERE BEHIND THE FIG LEAF OF BRIEFING ITALIAN GOVERNMENT
LEADERS ON MIDDLE EASTERN DEVELOPMENTS, A SUBJECT KNOWN TO BE OF
INTENSE INTEREST TO ITALY. FURTHER, FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI
HAS SEVERAL TIMES REITERATED HIS DESIRE TO HAVE LAST SEPTEMBER'S
CANCELLED VISIT HERE RESCHEDULED AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.
FINALLY, THE SECRETARY, AS THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE CABINET, WOULD
BE SPEAKING TO ITALIAN LEADERS WITH THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY OF OUR
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GOVERNMENT, A VOICE THAT WOULD BE HEEDED INFINITELY MORE
ATTENTIVELY THAN THAT OF AN OUTSIDE EMISSARY, HOWEVER PRESTIGIOUS
PERSONALLY. ALTHOUGH ONE MUST ASSUME THAT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT
WOULD BE INTERPRETED IN SOME QUARTERS HERE AS AMERICAN PRESSURE
ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION, WE WOULD AT LEAST HAVE THE
PLAUSIBLE REASONS FOR A VISIT OUTLINED ABOVE TO USE AS OFFICIAL
JUSTIFICATION. GARDNER

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